



# ***Iowa Outdoors***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
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## **SPENDING SUMMER OUTDOORS**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It's hard to beat families fishing and boats on the water, when you think of spending time outdoors in the summer. And there's been plenty of both in the past couple weeks.

Summer activities got a prolonged jumpstart, with free fishing days, the Memorial Day weekend a week earlier and Iowa's free camping weekend in state parks, prior to that. From here, the momentum should last through Labor Day.

Hundreds of Iowans-young and old were exposed to fishing; through organized fishing clinics at Kent Park, Lake Macbride or elsewhere through the state...or by just grabbing a pole and bait and trying it themselves. On June 4, Lake Macbride's beach lodge and adjacent picnic area turned into an outdoor classroom...and kitchen...as participants learned how to identify fish, cast a line, select the right tackle and even eat deep-fried fish prepared on the spot. "The idea was to pass along the basic knowledge of fishing; to show families that it's pretty easy," explained Department of Natural Resources aquatic educator Holly Thyer Schulte. "When these kids do catch a fish, their parents can see the look on their face and realize how much fun fishing can be."

Fishing was available from the lake shoreline for the dozens of families who stopped by. Some didn't even have to go down to the water for their dose of fishing fun. For 4-year-old Aaron Thompson, the big draw was turtles in a tank at the fishing ID station. "They look like trees," he insisted, pointing to the small painted and snapping turtles. Our best guess was that he meant they were generally colored and shaped like leaves, especially the serrated shell edges on the little snapper.

Macbride organizers want it to become an annual event. "We hope the families that gave fishing a try last weekend will pursue it," said Schulte. "It's a great way to enjoy the outdoors, pick up a lifetime hobby and understand our environment."

Judging by the ramp parking lots around Coralville Reservoir, the sunburns and the crowded water, just about everybody who wasn't fishing, must have been boating over the last couple weekends. I rode along with DNR conservation officer Shawn Meier for a few hours and got a splash of 'fun in the sun.'

More than a few times, that splash was a hard jolt as he throttled up the DNR's new 225 horsepower patrol boat to catch up with a violator. Problem #1? Ignoring Iowa's speed and distance laws. At fault are boaters who go whipping by another craft that is stopped or moving slowly through the water. If within 100 feet of that boat, you have to power down, or at least bank wide to reduce the wave that will soon hit them. Even overtaking a boat that is up to cruising speed, you need to maintain a 50-foot buffer.

It was an equal opportunity ticket distribution. One went to a 40-ish guy with his family, in a 30-foot, twin-engine inboard. He blew by us-and a disabled craft-at 60 feet. As he was signing the ticket, a shiny, new personal watercraft whipped by just a few yards off his bow; prompting him to ask why she could get away with it. She didn't. The 18-year-old had her ticket in hand as soon as we caught up with her. "It's something we see just about every time we turn around," admitted Meier. "The big thing is, if somebody would put their boat into gear, not paying attention, they are going to have an accident, for sure. It's perhaps the leading cause of boat accidents out there."

Given the sheer numbers of boats on the water, though, for the most part it was business as usual. Every boat we checked had enough lifejackets. Many, though, were stowed out of reach including some still in their plastic wrappers. Makes you wonder how soon any non-swimmers or potentially injured passengers could get into them, if an accident sent them into the lake.

There's still a lot of summer ahead. With more than 200,000 boats registered in Iowa, though, it's going to be crowded. Stay safe.

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## **THREE-YEAR PROJECT UNDERWAY IN CASINO BAY AT STORM LAKE**

STORM LAKE – The first phase of a major overhaul of Casino Bay at Storm Lake is coming to an end when the contractor finished deepening the harbor on June 8. The nearly \$3 million project to enhance Casino Bay will take a few years to complete, but the efforts by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources should fit nicely with other improvements in the area.

“We worked closely with the community to compliment the current work at Project AWAYSSIS and the ongoing lake dredging project,” said Mike McGhee, manager of the lake restoration program for the DNR. “We are going to concentrate most of the major work in the boating off-season so to have minimal disruption for the area.”

The second phase will begin after Labor Day, which will focus on the infrastructure. The area will receive electrical service, sewer and grading work. The third phase will begin after Labor Day 2007.

“Phase III has the most visible work, including new boat ramps, new sidewalks, a new marina building and lighted parking,” McGhee said. “There will be a concession and bait shop, and we are exploring the possibility of adding cabins to the area, but the cabins are only in the concept stage.”

The improvements are being funded by the state marine fuel tax, the parks and institutional road funds and federal coast guard grants.

**For more information, contact McGhee at 515-281-6281.**

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## **FISHING FOR A HEALTHY DIET**

DES MOINES – Swallow... hook, line and sinker! Eat Iowa’s great-tasting fish from lakes, rivers and streams to help your heart, prevent diseases and foster your child’s growth.

The Iowa Department of Public Health recommends eating at least two meals of fish from a variety of sources per week.

"Fish are low in saturated fats and contain high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids," said Tom Newton with the Iowa Department of Public Health. "Eating fish from a variety of sources, including those caught in Iowa and purchased in grocery stores, achieves the most health benefits."

The Iowa DNR, in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, regularly tests for chemicals in fish in select Iowa rivers and lakes.

“People are sometimes concerned about whether Iowa’s fish are safe to eat due to the small amounts of chemicals, natural or man-made, that may be present in fish tissue,” said John Olson of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “We are confident that fish consumption guidelines developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health and the

regular testing by the Iowa DNR and U.S. EPA minimize health risks associated with Iowa-caught fish.”

On the rare occasion that chemical levels are elevated, an advisory is issued. Rather than completely eliminate fish from the diet, advisories usually recommend eating only one meal per week of a specific type of fish in that water body, or avoiding certain species. Currently, only six Iowa water bodies have fish advisories.

Women who are pregnant or nursing, and children 12 years of age and younger, are recommended to limit consumption of Iowa predator fish (walleye, pike, etc.) to one meal per week. Panfish such as crappie and bluegill pose virtually no risks.

For more information and a list of current consumption advisories, visit <http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/news/consump.html>. For more information about the health benefits of Iowa-caught fish, visit: [http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/env/fish\\_health\\_issues.pdf](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/env/fish_health_issues.pdf)

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